

MISCELLANEOUS  
LETTERS,

Giving an Account of the

WORKS  
OF THE  
LEARNED,

Both at Home and Abroad.

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For the Month of *DECEMBER*, 1695.

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With a *T*ABLE of the Contents  
of this first Volume.

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*L O N D O N*;

Printed for Henry Rhodes, at the *Star* at the Corner  
of *Bride-Lane*; and William Lindsey, at the *Angel*  
near *Lincolns-Inn* in *Chancery-Lane*. MDCXCVI.

*Where may be had Compleat Sets, or single ones to this time.*

## A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

**T**Hese Letters being designed for promoting universal Learning, it is thought fit to publish, That if any Person will communicate to the Author any Remarks on Divinity, History, Physick, Astronomy, and the like, or any part of the same, their Observations will be kindly received, and printed with their Names if they think it fit.

Be pleased to direct for the Author of, &c. at Mr. Rhodes's in Fleet street, or Mr Lindsey's in Chancery-lane.

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## The C O N T E N T S.

**A**N Account of, and Reflections upon the two Essays sent from Oxford to a Nobleman in London, concerning some Errors about the Creation, General Flood, and the peopling of the World; as also of Fables, Romances, and the State of Learning. By L. P. Master of Arts. In a letter to the Author of the Miscellaneous monthly Letters, dated Dublin Decemb. 18. 1695.

*Christianity not Myſterious: Or a Treatiſe ſhewing that there is nothing in the Goſpel contrary to Reaſon, nor above it; and that no Chriſtian Doctrin can be properly called a Myſtery. In Octavo. Lond. 1696.*

*Quæſtiones ab illuſtri Ludolpho propoſitæ Gregorio Habefſino viro pio & docto: Giving an Account of the chief Tenets of the Abyſſines.*

# Miscellaneous Letters.

*An Account of, and Reflections upon the two Essays sent from Oxford to a Nobleman in London, concerning some Errors about the Creation, General Flood, and the peopling of the World; as also of Fables, Romances, and the State of Learning. By L. P. Master of Arts. Printed for Richard Baldwin 1695, London, in Octavo. In a Letter to the Author of the Miscellaneous monthly Letters. Dated Dublin Decemb. 18. 1695.*

S I R,

**I** Take this Occasion to thank you for the Pains you are pleas'd to take in publishing your *Miscellaneous Letters* once a Month, being a *Work* highly commendable, and deserving Publick Encouragement. My Subject at present is the *two aforementioned Essays*, which I shall touch with respect and tenderness, though indeed they deserve rebuke : If such Meditations as these are any ways acceptable to you, I will frequently entertain you with the like, especially with my *Observations on the Giant's Causey*, which is a primary fossil Production, (though jointed) not owing its Original to any imaginary Parts of *Animals* left there by a *Deluge*. I shall likewise send you my *Historical Account of all the Petrifications found by me in Ireland*. Now to the *Essays* sent me from *England*.

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The Author of these ingenious *Essays* begins with an *Apology* for the Freedom and Latitude he takes in Physical Problems, and Natural Disquisitions; in the discussing of which the World will always allow a Philosophical Liberty, the Holy Scriptures being written to shew unto Men the Kingdom of God, and to prepare their Minds to become his obedient Subjects, leaving the Universe, and the System thereof, to the Enquiries of Mankind for the exercise of his Rational Faculties, and for the Diversion of his Life; all which he confirms by the frequent Practices of most Christian Philosophers, who dispute for and against the Motion of the Earth, the Universality of the Deluge, &c.

The *Writer* therefore of this *Letter* examines and pretends to confute many of those Vulgar Opinions concerning the Formation of the World out of a *Chaos*, and the many Changes the *Earth* is said to have undergone by a general *Flood*; as also the various Ways of peopling the *Globe*, and of the Stile or Manner of Writing us'd among the *Orientals*.

The most considerable *Hypothesis* attack'd by our *Oxford Gentleman* is that of *Nicholas Steno*, published *Ann.* 1669, and 1671, in his *Anatom. Canis Carcharia*; and in his *Prodromus to a Dissertation concerning the several Changes of the Earth*, &c. Which is, that our *Globe* hath been all cover'd, dissolv'd, and mingled with Water; and that our present Mass of *Earth* is nothing but the several *Sediments* or *Beds* of that Mixture falling down, and settling in so many *Layers* or *Strata* of Sand, Gravel, Clay, Stone, &c. divided by Perpendicular and Horizontal Fissures: The main Argument whereof *Dr. Steno* fetches from the Site, Figure, and Order of these *Sediments* or *Beds*, and from the Number and Variety of Sea-Shells, parts of Animals and Vegetables, all lodged and embodied in these several subterraneous Solids; either really in their true natural Substances, or Textures, or else in Delineations, Figures, Impressions or Mouldings.

The Author of these Papers being not satisfy'd with the most convincing Proofs, and indeed Demonstrations laid down by *Steno* in the two *forementioned Tracts*, runs out into many nice and curious Speculations, which seem to oppose and overthrow all the Ground-work contriv'd by *Steno*.

His Arguments are taken from the Face of Nature, and Matter of Fact, as he presumes to insinuate. First, He argues that the subter-



subterraneous World is not dispos'd in that regular Order or Situation of Sediments out of a Fluid; because the most heavy Metals and Stones often lie near the Surface and Top of the Earth, and lighter Bodies under them; that Shells, and Plants found in Metallick Oars, and in Marbles, could not possibly come there by any Laws of Gravity or Descent; nor could the brittle Shells and tender Leaves be preserv'd entire and whole, during such a general Dissolution of Rocks, Mountains, and the most obdurate Bodies.

Secondly, Our *Author* will not conceive how the *Animals* could be preserv'd alive in this general *Catastrophe*, nor how the *New World* and distant *Ilands* could be stock'd with *Animals* that never were in *Asia*: Here he takes occasion to compare *America*, and other lately discover'd *Regions*, with those of the old known *Countries*, and concludes their *Original* not to be yet made out with any tolerable clearness; nor indeed that of *Negro's* inhabiting the Western Coasts of *Africa*.

After all he declares his Opinion in these dubious *Problems* to be, that the *Earth* was thus created in the beginning, that *subterraneous Bodies* shoot, and vegetate into great variety of Figures, many of which are neither to be matched at Sea nor Land; unless we vainly fancy that the greatest part of the Original *Creation* is utterly lost and destroy'd, for we find nothing like to some of these *fossil-figur'd Shells* and *Vegetables*. Besides, the *Author* is confident that *Shells* are often found in humane and other *Animal Bodies*, and that some *Plants* and *Insects* may rise up where *feminal Parents* never came; therefore he will needs conclude that such subterraneous Appearances are no necessary Proofs of any general *Dissolution of the Earth* imagin'd by the *Ingenious Steno*; who yet must be own'd an over-match for our *Academick*, whose Assertion is, that they are *Mock-shells*, or *Fossil-shell Stones*, and *mock Plants*, all Creatures of the Earth.

To these *Essays* we may add other *Objections* brought by some *Philosophers* against the *Stenonian Hypothesis of Sediments*, as that our *fossil Salt* could not settle down from that Mass of Waters, in whose Pores it would always float. That the *Ark* could scarce have been kept together, when all the Metals, Bolts, and Nails must have been dissolv'd. That the *Mountains* were not taken to pieces, nor mingled all together in the *Flood*, because *Moses* himself

tells us in plain words, that the Hills stood firm in the *Deluge*, and appear'd immediately the same upon the sinking of the Waters; but enough of this *Thread-bare Controversy*, which may be read at leasure in those *Authors* mention'd by the *Oxonian* in his *Essays*, pag. 10, 11. To which we may subjoin the Honourable Mr. *Boyle*, who in his *History of Gems*, and in some other *Tracts*, proves the Growth of Stones, Minerals, and other Fossils; how in their embrionated States they are fluid, or soft, and so may easily admit extraneous Bodies into them, as Insects, Herbs, Shells, &c. without having recourse for such *Phanomena* to any universal Dissolution of our Earth in a Deluge, and their subsid-ing down with heavy fossil Particles into those Layers or Beds of Sediments described by *Steno*.

Many strong Arguments occur in *Camden's Britan.* p. 692, 693. against this Opinion maintain'd by *Steno*, which the Reader may turn to at leisure; as that the Roots, Flowers, Fruits and Seeds of Plants seldom or never appear on Stones; that these Delineations of Mock-leaves so common on Slate, are not as to their majority reconcileable with those produced in the same Country, and many of them totally different from all Plants whatever, that have been yet figur'd or describ'd. The same is affirm'd of many of the Fossil Shells, and the Mock-shell Stones, by that curious *Keeper* of the *Oxford Museum*, who seems to promise his *Observations* upon these *subterraneous Productions*, which we all expect here with great impatience, he being a Person exactly skill'd in these Enquiries, and of a very sound unbiass'd Judgment.

Dublin College,  
Decemb. 18.  
1695.

I rest, S I R,

Your most obliged Servant,

S. G. A.

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## P O S T S C R I P T.

**U**PON reviewing these two *Essays* from *Oxford*, I find that I have touched the most considerable Part of the *Work* with two negligent a brevity ; I mean, the *second Part of the first Essay concerning the peopling and planting the new World, and other remote Countries* : In handling of which the *Author* seems to make a sort of *Parade* of his Literature in *Geography*, tho indeed he is now and then mistaken in Distances, unless, *pag.* 25. he means Miles by Leagues, for his Affirmation of the Longitudes of *Bermudas* and the *Azores* is erroneous in the common Acceptation ; but of some of the Islands in the *South Seas* his Calculation may be true, of their being a thousand Leagues remote from any Continent.

The chief Design of this *Piece* is to shew the *Author's* dissatisfaction with the Account the *Jews* have given of peopling and planting the World before and after the *Deluge* ; as also to confute the Opinions of many Modern *Writers* in conveying of *Colonies* and *Animals* from the old *World* into the *New*, by the Ways of *Norway*, *Tartary*, *China*, *Africa*, *Wales*, &c.

His principal Arguments are fetch'd from the Difficulties of such *Migrations* through frozen Climates, boisterous Seas, &c. and from the Differences in the Manners, Languages, Habits, Religions, Hue or Colour, Diets, Arts and Customs ; as also in the strangeness of their Quadrupeds, Birds, Serpents, and Insects ; many of which were never seen in *Asia*, *Africa*, or *Europe*, tho some are common to both the Old and New World. The prodigious and incredible Numbers of different Nations on the Rivers *Amazons*, and *St. Lawrence*, in *Brasile*, *Peru* and *Mexico*, furnish Materials for new Thoughts.

He affirms the *Americans* knew nothing of Stile, Pen, Ink, Paper, nor any manner of Letters, or Writing, but reckon'd by strung Beads, Knots, and Pebbles. They had neither Bellows, Saws, nor Nails, tho plenty of Iron in their Country : No Horses amongst them, nor our sort of Cow, nor our Sheep, nor our barking Dogs ; therefore the *Author* seems to wonder that the first *Inhabitants* should carry along with them out of the old *World* so many



many fierce, venomous and destructive Creatures, and leave the mild and useful Ones behind ; but he is more surpriz'd that the first *Passengers* should exhaust this their Native Country of many *Species* of *Animals* never found in it since (nor perhaps before) their generally believ'd *Migration*. Greater Difficulties are rais'd about planting the *Terra Australis*, and the *vast distant Islands* with *Creatures* that are strangers both to the *new and old World*. But to all these *Objections* I hope one Day to send you a satisfactory Answer, as also a clear History of the *Negroes*, and in what they differ from the *Whites*, and why peculiar to the Western Coasts of *Africa*.

As to his *Remarks* on the *Mythological, Romantick, Ænigmatical, Allegorical*, and *Typical* manners of writing us'd amongst the *Egyptians, Syrians, Hebrews, and Greeks* ; I shall give you in my next the Observations and Examination I have made of them.

*Christianity not Mysterious: or a Treatise shewing that there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to Reason, nor above it ; and that no Christian Doctrine can be properly called a Mystery. In 8°. Lond. 1696.*

**H**AVING been told from our Cradle, that the Christian Religion contains great and sublime *Mysteries*, 'tis likely that many People will be offended at the Title of this Book, and think, without any examination, that the Author can be no less than an Heretick to maintain the contrary. This Prejudice, tho never so common, is very unjust ; and methinks we ought in this Case, as in all others, to hear a Man before we pass Judgment upon him. My Business being not to commend or condemn Books, but only to give an Account of the Design of their Authors, I'll forbear any farther Reflections.

Our Author has undertaken to shew three things ; 1. That the true Religion must necessarily be reasonable and intelligible. 2. That those requisite Conditions are found in Christianity : And, 3. that the Christian Religion was divinely revealed from Heaven.



Heaven. In this first Treatise he endeavours to prove that the reputed Mysteries of the Gospel are neither contrary to Reason, nor above it, nor properly Mysteries. In the second he attempts a particular and rational Explanation of these reputed Mysteries. And, lastly, in the third he demonstrates the Verity of Divine Revelation, against Devils and Atheists. This Method seems to him more agreeable to the Order of Nature, than that commonly used in Systems of Divinity : They prove, says he, the Authority and Perfection, before they teach the Contents of Scripture ; but how can any be sure that the Scripture contains all things necessary to Salvation, till he first reads it over ? Nay, how can he conclude it to be Scripture, or the Word of God, till he exactly studies it ?

The subject Matter of this Treatise, which is to be followed by two others, as I have intimated, being thus stated, *viz. That there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to Reason, nor above it ; and that no Christian Doctrine can be properly called a Mystery :* The Author proceeds to the proof thereof, and divides his Book into three Sections ; the first whereof treats of *Reason*.

This preliminary Dissertation will perhaps appear somewhat obscure to ordinary Readers, I mean to such who peruse not Books with application of Thought ; and the Author owns it has been inserted, especially to prevent the *foreseen Wranglings of certain Men, who study more to protract and perplex, than terminate a Controversy*. He tells us first of all, that *Reason* is not the Soul abstractly considered, nor that Order or Report which is naturally between all things, but that it may be defined that *Faculty of the Soul which discovers the certainty of any thing dubious or obscure, by comparing it with something evidently known ;* whereas when the Mind, without the assistance of any other *Idea*, immediately perceives the Agreement or Disagreement of two or more *Ideas*, as that two and two are four, that Red is not Blue ; that Method of Knowledg is called *Self-evidence, or Intuition*. It follows from thence, that when we have no Notions or *Idea's* of a thing, we can't reason about it at all. The Author distinguishes in the next place, the Means of Information, from the Ground of Perswasion : By the first he understands those Ways whereby any thing comes barely to our Knowledg, without necessarily commanding our Assent ; and by the Ground of Perswasion, that Rule by which we judg of all Truth,

Truth, and which irresistibly convinces the Mind. The Means of Information are Experience and Authority; and the infallible Rule or Ground of all right Perswasion, is Evidence, which consists in the exact conformity of our Idea's or Thoughts with their Objects, or the things we think upon; for as we have only Idea's in us, and not the things themselves, 'tis by those we must form a Judgment of these. This is the Conclusion of the first Section, which contains four Chapters.

In the Second the Author proves, that the Doctrines of the Gospel are not contrary to Reason; and by what is contrary to Reason, he understands, *what is evidently repugnant to clear and distinct Idea's, or to our common Notions.* The Author owns, that no Christian (for ought he knows) expressly says, that Reason and the Gospel are contrary to one another; but, says he, they affirm the same thing in other Terms, when they maintain that though the Doctrines of the latter cannot in themselves be contradictory to the Principles of the former, as proceeding both from God; yet that according to our Conceptions of them they may seem directly to clash; and that though we cannot reconcile them by reason of our corrupt and limited Understandings, yet that from the Authority of Divine Revelation we are bound to believe and acquiesce in them. This brings our Author to examine in the first Chapter the Absurdity and Effects of admitting any real or seeming Contradiction in Religion.

The second Chapter treats of the Authority of Revelation, as it regards this Controversy; and the Author maintains, that it is not a necessitating Motive of Assent, but a *mean of Information*, as he has more largely declared in the first Section, and that we must believe nothing without *Evidence* in the things themselves; the clear conception we form of what is told us, and not the Authority of him that speaks, being the *Ground of Perswasion.* The Words of Revelation must be intelligible, and the Matter revealed possible: for, says our Author, if we count that Person a Fool who requires our Assent to what is manifestly incredible, how dare we blasphemously attribute to the most perfect Being what is an acknowledged Defect in one of our selves? We can no more believe unintelligible Relations from the Revelation of God, than from that of Man; for the conceived Idea's of things being the only Subjects of believing, denying, approving, and every other

other Act of the Understanding, all Matters revealed by God or Man, must be equally intelligible and possible. So far both Revelations agree, but in this they differ, that though the Revelation of Man should be thus qualified, *yet he may impose upon me as to the Truth of the thing*: whereas what God is pleased to discover to me, is not only clear to my Reason, (without which his Revelation could make me no wiser) but likewise *it is always true*, God being not capable to deceive me as Man is.

In the third Chapter the Author undertakes to prove, that by Christianity was intended a rational and intelligible Religion; and this he evidences, 1. From the Works and Miracles of Christ, which were such as the stiff-necked *Jews* themselves could not deny to be divine; 2. From the Method followed in the Gospel; and, 3. From its Stile, which is most easy, most natural, and in the common Dialect of those to whom it was immediately consigned. No pretences therefore can be drawn from the Obscurity of the Language in favour of the *irrational Hypothesis*; for all Men are supposed to understand the daily use of their Mother-Tongue: whereas the Stile of the Learned is unintelligible to the Vulgar. In short, *Peter* exhorteth Christians to be ready always to give an Answer to every one that asks them a Reason of their Hope; but, pray, to what purpose should be this Exhortation, were Christ's Doctrines incomprehensible? Were Men oblig'd to believe what is contrary to natural Reason, and our own ordinary Idea's, who could say to God as *David*, *Thy Word is a Lamp unto my Feet, and a Light unto my Path*?

The fourth Chapter contains the Author's Answers to the Objections drawn from the pravity of Humane Reason, and sheweth that Reason, *taken for that Faculty every one has of judging of his Idea's according to their agreement and disagreement, and so of loving what seems good unto him, and hating what he thinks evil*, is whole and entire in every one whose Organs are not accidentally indisposed; but if by Reason, be understood a constant right use of that Faculty, it must be confessed it is extremely corrupt, for we are too prone to frame wrong Conceptions and as erroneous Judgments of things. We generally covet what flatters our Senses, without distinguishing noxious from innocent Pleasures, and our Hatred is as partial. But as these Disorders are so far from being Reason, that they are contrary to it; let no Body think to be



excused by this *imaginary Corruption*, but learn from the Scripture, that the Gospel is only hid to them whose Minds are blinded by the God of this World ; and therefore let us amend our Ways, and turn from our Iniquities.

Our Author having proved that there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to Reason, undertakes to prove in the third Section, That *there is nothing mysterious or above Reason in the same* ; and because the definition of Words is absolutely necessary to understand the State of the Question, he tells us that this Expression, *to be above, though not contrary to Reason*, is taken in a twofold signification: 1. It denotes *a thing intelligible of it self*, but so covered by figurative Words, Types and Ceremonies, that Reason cannot penetrate the Vail, nor see what is under it *till it be removed*. 2. It is made to signify a thing of its own *Nature inconceivable*, and not to be judged of by our ordinary Faculties and Idea's, though it be never *so clearly revealed*. In both these Senses to be above Reason, is the same thing with Mystery, and they are convertible Terms in Divinity.

This being premised, the Author gives us in the first Chapter, the History and signification of *Mystery*, in the Writings and Theology of the Antient Gentiles, whereof it was a considerable Term ; and sheweth, by a great number of Quotations, that they understood by Mystery, a thing intelligible of it self, but so veiled by others, that it could not be known without special Revelation. The word Mystery is constantly used by the Greek and Roman Authors, as a very vulgar Expression for any thing Sacred or Profane, that is designedly kept secret, or accidentally obscure, and it is still at this Day the common Acceptation of it amongst us : For when we cannot see clearly into a Business, we say it is a Mystery to us. But in point of Religion, many take this word Mystery in the second Sense, *viz.* for a *thing inconceivable in it self, however clearly revealed*. In opposition to this Opinion our Author undertakes to demonstrate, that in the New Testament *Mystery* is always used in the first sense of the word, or that of the Gentiles, *viz.* for things naturally very intelligible, but so covered by figurative Words or Rites, that Reason could not discover them without special Revelation.

2. That the Vail is actually taken away, from whence it will manifestly follow, that the Doctrine so revealed cannot now be properly called *Mystery*.  
To



To succeed in his Undertaking, the Author proves first of all in the second Chapter, that nothing can be said to be a Mystery, because we have not an adequate Idea of it, or a distinct view of all its Properties at once; for indeed were this true, then every thing in the World would be a Mystery: We know nothing of Bodies but their Properties, and God has wisely provided that we should understand no more of these than are useful and necessary for us; and therefore rightly speaking, we are accounted to comprehend any thing, when its chief Properties and their several Uses are known to us. I understand nothing better than this Table upon which I am now writing, I conceive it divisible into Parts beyond all Imagination; but shall I say it is above my Reason, because I cannot count these Parts, nor distinctly perceive their Quantity and Figures? The Author brings many other Arguments much to the same effect, and concludes, that no Christian Doctrine, no more than any ordinary piece of Nature, can be reputed a Mystery, because we have not an adequate or compleat Idea of whatever belongs to it. *Secondly*, That what is revealed in Religion, as it is more useful and necessary, so it must and may be easily comprehended, and found as consistent with our common Notions, as what we know of Wood or Stone, of Air, of Water, and the like. And, *thirdly*, that when we do as familiarly explain such Doctrines, as what is known of natural things, (*which he pretends we can*) we may be as properly said to comprehend the one as the other. Neither God himself therefore, nor any of his Attributes, are Mysteries to us for want of an adequate Idea; and Eternity is no more above Reason because it *cannot be imagined*, than a Circle because *it may*; for in both Cases Reason performs its parts according to the different Nature of the Objects, whereof the one is essentially imaginable, the other not. We know nothing neither of the *real Essence* of things, that is, their intrinsic Constitution, which is the Ground or Support of all their Properties, and from which they natural flow, but it cannot be said for all that, that those things are above our Reason; for then, as it has been already said, all things in the World without exception will be Mysteries, the real Essence of one thing being no more knowable than that of another.

The third Chapter treats of the Signification of the word *Mystery* in the New Testament, and the Writings of the most Anti-

ent Christians : for the Question being, *Whether or no Christianity is mysterious*, it ought to be naturally decided by the New Testament, wherein the Christian Faith is originally contained ; and I appeal, says the Author, *to this Tribunal*. He observeth in the first place, that some Evangelick Doctrines are called *Mysteries* in a more general, or in a more particular Sense. The first are certain Matters of Fact only known to God, and lodged in his Decree, or such Events as were quite lost and forgot in the World, which no Body was able to discover. Secondly, Some Doctrines of the New Testament are more particularly called Mysteries, because they were hid from God's peculiar People under the Mosaick Oeconomy, and not fully revealed till the New Testament Times, being veiled before by various Typical Representations, Ceremonies and figurative Expressions. He then transcribes all the Passages of the New Testament, wherein the word *Mystery* is mentioned, to make out these three things. 1. That Mystery is read for the Gospel, or the Christian Religion in general, as it was a future Dispensation totally hid from the Gentiles, and but very imperfectly known to the Jews. 2. That some particular Doctrines occasionally revealed by the Apostles, are said to be *manifested Mysteries*, that is, unfolded Secrets. And, 3. that Mystery is put for any thing veiled under Parables, or enigmatical Forms of Speech. He concludes this Chapter by the Testimony of some of the Primitive Fathers, and affirms, that all of them of the three first Centuries, had exactly the same Notion of *Mystery* that he has.

The fourth Chapter contains some Objections brought from particular Texts of Scripture, from the Nature of Faith and Miracles, with the Author's Answers to the same ; and the fifth sheweth when, why, and by whom *Mysteries* were brought into Christianity : but having been so long upon the foregoing Chapters, I only mention the Title of these.

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Quæstiones ab illustri Ludolpho propositæ Gregorio Habessino viro pio & docto : *Giving an Account of the chief Tenets of the Abyssinians.*

**T**HIS Treatise is yet but a Manuscript, an Account whereof has been communicated to me, which I have thought fit to publish, and especially since I have been acquainted, that a Learned Divine of our Church designs to oblige the World with an Ecclesiastical History of *Ethiopia*, collected out of the best Authors : For if this Account falls soon enough into his Hands, 'tis likely that it will help him to correct some Mistakes of the Authors he makes use of.

It would be superfluous to say any thing in commendation of the Learned *Ludolph* ; his History of *Ethiopia*, and his *Epistole Samaritane*, besides many other Books, have made him sufficiently known in the Commonwealth of *Learning* ; but it will not be amiss to say how his Questions were conveyed to the Learned *Abyssinian*, mentioned in the Title, and how his Answers were afterwards transmitted to him. This we learn from a Letter in *Dutch*, annexed to this Treatise, written from *Suratte* to the Directors of the *East-India* Company of *Holland*, dated *Decemb. 8. 1685*. Monsieur *Ludolph* finding that the Authors who have given us an Account of the Religion of *Ethiopians*, do often contradict themselves, and thereby the Reader is at a loss what to believe, desired those Gentlemen to procure him an Answer from some learned Man amongst that People, to twelve Questions by him proposed ; and they charged their Directors in the *East-Indies* with that Commission, and this is the Answer they received.

The first Question concerns the Holy Scriptures, the Canonical Books, and the Councils which they own for *Oecumenick* ; and it appears by the Answer that they divide the Old Testament into four Parts, and the New into as many. The *Law*, the *Kings*, *Salomon*, and the *Prophets*, are the General Titles of the Books of the Old Testament. Under the *Law* are included the five Books  
of



of *Moses*, *Joshua*, *Judges*, and *Ruth*: under the *Kings*, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>d</sup> of *Kings*, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>d</sup> Book of the *Chronicles*, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>d</sup> Book of *Ezra*; those of *Tobias*, *Judith*, *Esther*, *Job*, and the *Psalms*. By the Title of *Salomon*, they mean the *Proverbs*, the *Sermon* or *Ecclesiastes*, *Salomon's Song*, the *Wisdom*, and the Book of the Son of *Sirac*. Under the fourth general Title are included all the Books of the Prophets, in the same order they are in our *Canon*, with this difference only, that the Book of *Baruc* comes immediately after the Lamentations of *Jeremiah*; the two Books of *Maccabees* are also contained under this Head.

The New Testament is also divided into four Parts, *viz.* the *Gospels*, the *Acts of the Apostles*, *Paul*, and the *Apostles*. The 1<sup>st</sup> Part contains the four *Gospels*, the 2<sup>d</sup> the *Acts*, the 3<sup>d</sup> the Epistles of *St. Paul*, as they are found in our New Testament; but the 4<sup>th</sup>, besides the Epistles of the other Apostles which we have, contains 8 Books altogether unknown to us. The *Abyssinians* attribute them to the Apostles, and call them *Manda*, that is, Precepts and Commandments, and *Aptelis* which signifies *Canon*. They own the *Nicene* Councils, and those of *Constantinople* and *Ephesus*, but they reject that of *Chalcedon*, in which *Dioscorus* was condemned and excommunicated, not, if we believe them, for being a Sectator of *Eutyches*, but out of Envy and Jealousy.

The second Question proposed by Monsieur *Ludolph*, relates to the *Terms* they make use of to explain their Opinion about the *Trinity*; and it appears by the Answers that they use a word, which may be translated *Face*; but by the Explanations that Doctor gives of it, 'tis plain, that they understand by that word, the same thing the Greeks understood by *ὑπόστασις*; and that they have another Term which answers to our Word *Person*; in short, that their Faith is the same on that Point as that of the Latin Church.

To the third Question, which concerns the Union of the two Natures in Jesus Christ, and his descent into Hell, our *Abyssinian* answers, that they reject the Errors of *Eutyches*, and that their Church believes that since the Incarnation of the *Word*, there have been two Natures in Christ, in so much that he is truly God and Man without separation, change and confusion. The Godhead was united with the Manhood, says he, as Fire unites it self with Iron, or the Light with the Eyes. As to the second part of the Question he tells us, that the *Ethiopians* believe the Descent of Christ  
into



into Hell, tho it is not mentioned in the *Nicene Creed*, the only one they own, but because it is contained in a Book which they have a great respect for, called *The Faith of the Fathers*. He further tells Mr. *Ludolph*, that the Authors quoted by him in his Question, are much mistaken in affirming, that they believe that Christ descended into Hell, to set at liberty the Souls of *Adam* and other Holy Men of the Old Testament, and even his own Soul; which last Opinion they disown as a great Error.

The fourth Question concerns the Procession of the Holy Ghost, and the Answer is a little obscure; but it appears that they believe that he *proceeds* from the Father, and *takes* from the Son, as it is expressed in *St. John*.

The fifth Question is about Baptism, and why they retain the Circumcision; to which he answers, that they don't retain it to *Judaize*, but only out of respect for Antient Customs. They circumcise their Children eight days after their Birth, not in the Church but in their Houses; and that Ceremony is performed by Women, and not by Priests as among the Jews. They circumcise their Daughters as well as their Sons, but the manner of it is not fit to be related here. They used formerly to baptize their Boys forty days after their Birth, and their Girls after fourscore; but now there is no time fixed, and they baptize when it is their Fathers Will to have it, provided they are first circumcised. The Children are presented by God-fathers. They turn their Faces to the four parts of the World, to signify that God who sanctifies them is Lord of the Universe; they blow and lay their Hands upon them, and anoint them with Oil consecrated by the Metropolitan, if there be any, for 'tis not looked upon as essential to Baptism: They pray upon them, but they don't exorcise the Water, but only the Child with these words, *Come out of him unclean Spirit*. They afterwards pour upon his Lips some drops of the consecrated Wine of the Eucharist; but it is not true as it is reported, that they administer them the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, nor a *Baptism of Fire* in putting a Red Cross on their Foreheads. They do not believe that Children become Holy in their Mothers Womb when they receive the Eucharist; nor is it true that they repeat their first Baptism every Year. Our Doctor tells us, that the Feast they celebrate every Year in commemoration of the Baptism of Christ, has in all likelihood given occasion to that Report, that

that that Feast lasts several Days, and they go as much as they can on the Water, singing and giving all other Demonstrations of Joy.

On the sixth Question concerning the Eucharist our Doctor tells us, that they receive it under both Kinds, the Laicks as well as the Clergy; that they make use of leavened Bread; that they communicate in the Church as often as they please, (the Custom of carrying the Communion to sick Folks in their House, being but lately introduced among them); that they forbear spitting a whole day after; that they have but one single *Mass* a day in a Church, and that 'tis never lawful to receive any Money for the same. He tells us also, that they own but three Sacraments, *viz.* Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the Confession; and that the extream Unction, and other Sacraments of the Papists, are unknown to them.

The Auricular Confession is the subject Matter of the 7th Question, and of the Answer to the same; from which it appears that there is no Law which commands the *Abyssinians* to confess themselves at certain times, the Sinner is the best Judg of it. The Penalties inflicted are commonly Fasts, or Alms; but when the Transgression is great, they are condemned to whip themselves; and when they are about it they make use of these words, *Let us chastise our selves, lest God should chastise us, and that he may have mercy upon us.*

To the 8th Question proposed by Monsieur *Ludolph*, concerning the Ecclesiastical Ministry, and other things belonging to the same, our Doctor answers; 1. That formerly the Order of Priesthood was not conferred upon Persons under 30 Years of Age, but now that Custom is laid aside. 2. Those who are born Illegitimate are never receiv'd into Orders. 3. Few Priests marry when they have received their Ordinations; but if they are married before, they are obliged to continue with their Wives. 4. Monks are bound to a single Life; but if any of them should marry, there is no corporal Punishment inflicted for the same; they cast him out of the Monastery, and he is look'd upon with slight and scorn. 5. The *Noviciate* of Monks was heretofore of seven Years, but now it lasts but one; they never make Vows nor Oaths, but they barely promise to lead a single Life, to forsake the World, and to submit themselves to the Laws of their Order. 6. Priests are forbidden to marry a second time, upon pain of being deposed; and it is  
not

not lawful for them to keep a *Concubine*. 7. The number of Churches and Priests is not fixed. 8. The Priests have no manner of share in the Civil Government. 9. They are chosen by the Inhabitants of Towns, and the Metropolitan gives them the Ordination. 10. They read publickly in Churches the holy Scriptures and Liturgies, but they have no Sermons. 11. It belongs to the Patriarch of *Alexandria*, and Bishops of *Egypt* to elect the Metropolitan of *Ethiopia*, who is commonly of *Alexandria*, and a Monk of the Order of St. *Anthony*. 12. That Metropolitan has Power to excommunicate such as have committed great Crimes. 13. The King seizes his Revenues and Riches upon his Death, but he restores them to his Successor immediately after his Election. 14. Every Church has certain Revenues appointed for the Maintenance of the Ministers. 15. All *Ethiopians* in general wear long Beards, and it is not true that the Laicks are obliged to shave themselves. 16. When Priests go upon a long Journey, they have a Cross painted on their Hands as a Mark of their Priesthood, but they wear no Crucifix; they allow Pictures, but they abhor all graven Images. 17. They have no holy Water in their Churches, but when they visit the Sick, they read the Gospel, and pour on them some Water which they call *Water of Prayer*. 18. They have no publick Schools, but Priests teach them to read and write; and if they have a mind to make a farther progress in Learning, they board in Monasteries.

The 9th Question is about Matrimony, and it appears that Polygamy is not lawful amongst them; and those who are guilty of that Crime, are excluded from their Assemblies: Adultery is punished by the Confiscation of the Estate of the Adulterer, to the Profit of the Party offended. The Marriage of Deacons is performed in Churches, but all other in private Houses: Their Feast on that Occasion lasts ten days, during which the married Couple keep always within Doors. When the Husband desires to be divorced from his Wife, he is exhorted to continue with her; but if he persists in his Resolution, the Divorce is granted, not by the Authority of the *Komorat*, that is, the Ecclesiastical Tribunal, but by the Civil Magistrate; and he that sues for the Divorce, is obliged to restore to his Wife her Estate; but if they both consent to their Separation, their Estate is equally divided. Priests are excluded from that Privilege. 'Tis not lawful for any to marry his Brother's Widow, as it was by the Law of *Moses*.



The Answer to the 10th Question concerning Ceremonies, Rites, and other things of this Nature, is pretty long, and contains several Articles, of which I shall only mention the most curious.

1. Women sick of their ordinary Distemper, are forbidden the Church, they stay at Home or at the Doors of the Churches; and when that Distemper is over, they take another Apparel. They keep 40 days within Doors after they are delivered of a Boy, and 80 for a Girl.
2. The *Abyssinians* pull off their Shoes when they come into their Churches, not in imitation of what *Moses* did on *Horeb*, but to express their Respect for the Holiness of the Place. They do the like coming into the King's Palace; they never spit in the Churches, and attend Divine Service with great Silence and Application.
3. There is in every Church a Vail which covers a kind of Sanctuary, into which no Body is allowed to come but such who are in Orders.
4. They forbear eating most part of the things forbidden by *Moses*, not in imitation of the *Jews*, but out of respect for an old Custom.
5. They *invoke* the Blessed Virgin and other Saints, and trust much to their Intercession.
6. They have a great Number of Feasts, whereof the most solemn are in commemoration of the greatest Events of the Gospel.
7. Women were formerly forbidden to come into Monasteries; but now a-days it seems Monks are not so wild, and like enough they'll grow more familiar.

The 11th Question concerns the *visible Chief or Head of the Church*: whereupon we are told that the *Ethiopians* consider the Pope as a Patriarch, to whom the first Councils have given a *Precedence* above others; but they reject the Authority he assumes above them. They are under the spiritual Jurisdiction of the Patriarch of *Alexandria*, and have no manner of correspondence with the Pope.

In the Answer to the 12th Question, the *Ethiopian* Doctor treats of the Burial of the Dead, and of the Opinions of his Countrymen concerning the future State of the Soul: They acknowledg but two Places, the Paradise and Hell, and therefore no *Limbo's* nor Purgatory. However he owns that some amongst them believe that the Souls of holy Men will not be admitted into Heaven till after the second coming of Christ, and the general Resurrection of the Dead. One may, it seems, infer from this Doctrine, that they believe that the Soul dies with the Body, and will rise again with the same.



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